

101
The Dissolution of this World by
Fire.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Right Honourable
Sir Gilbert Heatbrote, Knight,
L O R D - M A Y O R,

T H E
Aldermen, and Citizens of London,

A T T H E
CATHEDRAL-CHURCH of St. PAUL,

O N
Monday, September 3. 1711.

T H E
Day of Humiliation for the dreadful Fire, in
the YEAR, 1666.

By BENJAMIN IBBOT, M. A.

Rector of the United Parishes of St. Vedast,
alias Foster's, and St. Michael Quern; And
Chaplain to his Grace the Lord Archbishop
of Canterbury.

R
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Veneris xxviii. die Sep-
tembris 1711. Annoq[ue]
R. Reginae Annæ Mag-
næ Britannia, &c. De-
cimo.

THIS Court doth desire Mr. Ibbot
to Print his SERMON Preach'd
before the Lord-Mayor, Aldermen and
Livery-Men of the severall Companie
of this City, at the Cathedral Church
of St. Paul, on Monday the Third In-
stant, being the Day of Humiliation
for the Great Fire, in the Year One
Thousand Six Hundred Sixty and Six.



GIBSON

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
Sir Gilbert Heathcote, Kt.

LORD-MAYOR,

AND TO THE
COURT of ALDERMEN
OF THE

City of *LONDON*;

THIS
S E R M O N

IS
Humbly Dedicated.

THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
ST. JOHN
LORD
COUNCIL
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Humbly Dedicated

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2 PET. iii. II.

Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness?

THE Apostle's Design in this Chapter is to establish the Truth of that great Article of our Faith, *The second Coming of our Saviour to Judge the World*, and answer some Objections which were made against it.

To this end he begins with reminding those he writes to, *of the Predictions of the ancient Prophets, and of the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, concerning the Day of Judgment*, which was thought by many of the Disciples to be near at Hand, and that it would presently follow upon the *Destruction of Jerusalem*.

This seems to be the Reason of their joining these two Questions together, and putting them both to our Saviour at the same time; *Matt. xxiv. 3. Tell us, when shall these Things be? And what shall be the Sign of thy Coming, and of the End of the World? When shall these Things be, i. e. the Things our Saviour had just been speaking of, the Destruction of the City and Temple of Jerusalem;*

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and what shall be the Sign of thy Coming to Judgment at the End of the World?

As to the Destruction of Jerusalem, our Saviour is pretty exact in fixing the Time; for he tells them, *v. 34. That that Generation should not pass till all those things were fulfilled*; and gives them several very plain Signs and Tokens whereby they might know when it would be.

But as to *his coming to Judgment at the End of the World*; tho' he often peremptorily foretold it, and expressly assur'd them of it, yet he never determin'd and fix'd any Time for it; but on the contrary, told them, that God had reserv'd it as a Secret to himself, and not imparted it to any, not to the Angels of Heaven; no, nor to the Son himself. *But of that Day, and that Hour, knoweth no Man; no, not the Angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father, Matt. xxiv. 36. and Mark xiii. 32.*

However, this Opinion was current among the first Christians; and this mistake, whatever led them into it, gave occasion to these Scoffers, which the Apostle speaks of in this Chapter, to deride their Hopes and Expectations of a Judgment to come, since the Time they had fix'd for it was already past; *Where, say they, is the Promise of his Coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation.*

But the Apostle shows them, that there had been such Alterations in the World already, as were sufficient to justify the Belief of those which we expect

pect at our Saviour's coming to Judgment; and that the delay of a future Judgment is no Prejudice to the Truth of our Saviour's Predictions concerning it, but an Argument of God's Patience and Long-suffering towards Sinners in expectation of their Repentance; and that the thing it self is never the less certain, because the Time is uncertain when it will be.

And therefore he goes on to confirm the first Christians in their Belief of this Point, and directs them to make a right use of such a Belief. *But the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night; in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth also, and the Works that are therein, shall be burnt up.*

And then he makes this pious Reflection upon it, in the Words of the Text; *Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness?*

Which Words contain these two Things:

I. *The Conflagration, or Dissolution of this World by Fire.*

II. *The Effect and Influence which this Consideration ought to have upon us, seeing then that all these Things shall be, &c.*

And this, I think, will be a proper Subject for our present Meditations: 'Tis, indeed, what the Calamity, which we commemorate this Day, does

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naturally lead us to; for who can reflect upon that dreadful Fire which consum'd this great and populous City, and cast down from Heaven to Earth the Beauty of Israel, and not call to mind that great and terrible Day of the Lord, when the Heavens themselves shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up? And what better Improvement can we make of that heavy Judgment, than to take occasion from thence to meditate upon the general Judgment of the World, and be mov'd to make hast and escape the Wrath to come?

I. Then, let us consider the Conflagration, or Dissolution of this World by Fire at the last Day, the Day of Judgment. And for the Establishment of the Truth of this Doctrine, we may produce,

1. The Authority of the Antient Heathens.
2. The express Testimony of Holy Scripture. And,
3. Examine what Reason has to say for or against it.

I. As to the Authority of the Antient Heathen Writers; If we hearken to them, we shall (as a celebrated Author expresses it) hear a Cry of Fire throughout all Antiquity, and throughout all the People of the Earth.

This is one of the most antient Traditions we meet with; nor is there any Notion which has more universally prevail'd. 'Tis what the old Poets sung of, and the antient Philosophers of different Sects and Countries taught in their Schools; and the wisest Men of all Ages and Nations believ'd: That Water and Fire were the Two unruly Elements

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ments which should destroy the World; and that as God did once suffer the Waters to pass their bounds, and overflow the Earth; so the Day was coming, when he would give the same Permission to Fire, and let loose its Reins to consume and burn up this habitable World (*a*).

Whence they had this Notion is not to my present Purpose to enquire: There are many and various Conjectures about it: But the Thing it self is past doubt that this was the commonly receiv'd Opinion, and the antient Belief of the World. But I proceed,

In the *Second Place*, to produce some Testimonies to this Purpose out of the Sacred Writings.

In the Old Testament we meet with many, and those no obscure Predictions of this general Conflagration.

Thus *Moses*, in his Prophetical Song, gives us this lively Description of it. *Deut. xxxii. 22. A Fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest Hell, and shall consume the Earth with her increase, and set on fire the Foundations of the Mountains.*

And thus the *Psalmist* tells us, in *Psal. cii. 25.* which Passage is cited by the Author to the *Hebrews*, *Chap. i. 10. Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth: And the Heavens are the work of thy Hands: They shall perish, but thou*

(*a*) Sicut Deus olim aquis fræna laxavit, ita laxabit igni. Ὅταν πνεῦμα θυμὸς ἀνταρῶν σὺν δυνάμει θεοῦ αἰθρῇ, &c. *Sophocles. Besides, Dr. Burnet, and Mr. Ray, the Reader may consult Grotius upon this Chapter, and the Testimonies he refers to in his Notes upon the first Book, De veritate religionis Christianæ circa finem.*

shalt

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shalt endure : They all shall wax old as doth a Garment, and as a Vesture shall thou change them, and they shall be chang'd ; but thou art the same, and thy Tears shall not fail.

The Prophet *Isaiah* has a Passage to the same Purpose, in Chap. li. 6. Lift up your Eyes to the Heavens, and look upon the Earth beneath : For the Heavens shall vanish away like Smoak, and the Earth shall wax old like a Garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner ; but my Salvation shall be for ever, and my Righteousness shall not be abolished. And in Chap. lxi. 15. Behold, the Lord will come with Fire, and with his Chariots like a Whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with Flames of Fire.

And in the Prophet *Daniel*, Chap. vii. 9, 10 the Antient of Days is plac'd in his Seat of Judgment cover'd with Flames. I beheld 'till the Thrones were cast down, and the Antient of Days did sit, whose Garment was white as Snow, and the Hair of his Head like the pure Wool : His Throne was like the fiery Flame, and his Wheels as burning Fire. A fiery Stream issued, and came forth from before him : Thousand Thousands ministered unto him, and Ten Thousand times Ten Thousand stood before him : The Judgment was set, and the Books were opened.

And the Prophet *Zephaniah*, in Chap. iii. 8. thus speaks, in the Name of the Lord, Therefore wait upon me, saith the Lord, until the Day that I rise up to the Prey : for my Determination is to gather the Nations, that I may assemble the Kingdoms to pour upon them mine Indignation, even all my fierce anger ; for a

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the Earth shall be devoured with the Fire of my Jealousie. And the Prophet Malachi gives us the same Description of the Day of the Lord, Chap. iv. 1. Behold, the Day cometh that shall burn as an Oven, and all the Proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the Day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither Root nor Branch.

Thus do Moses and the Prophets bear witness to this Truth; to which if we add the Testimony of our Saviour, and his Apostles, the Evidence will be still much clearer and stronger.

Our Saviour tells his Disciples, Matt. v. 18. 'Till Heaven and Earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. And more directly, Mark xiii. 31. that Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but my Words shall not pass away.

And St. Paul tells the Thessalonians, in his second Epistle, Chap. i. 7, 8. That the Lord Jesus shall be reveal'd from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.—

Thus also St. John describes this Day, Rev. vi. 14. And the Heaven departed as a Scroll when it is rolled together, and every Mountain and Island were moved out of their Places; which is cited from the Prophet Isaiah xxxiv. 4. And all the Host of Heaven shall be dissolv'd, and the Heavens shall be rolled together as a Scroll, and all their Host shall fall down as the Leaf falleth off from the Vine, and as a falling Fig from the Fig-tree. Again, in Chap. xx. 11, 14. And
I saw

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I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no Place for them — and Death and Hell were cast into the Lake of Fire.

But there is none who delivers this Doctrine in more plain and express Terms than *St. Peter*, in the Verses before the Text, where he tells us, *That the Heavens, and the Earth which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto Fire against the Day of Judgment and Perdition of ungodly Men. And that the Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night; in the which the Heavens shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat, the Earth also and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up.*

Thus, we see, this Point is fully prov'd by undeniable Testimonies of Holy Scripture:

Let us now,

In the *Second Place*, Consider what Reason has to say for or against it.

And here it must be confess'd that this is a Thing which bare unassisted Reason could never have discover'd; nor can it (after all the Attempts that have been made) be accounted for from natural Causes, but must be finally resolv'd into the Will and Power of Almighty God (a).

(a) Ex disparibus Elementis ita (est) unus mundus ista coagmentata conspiratione solidatus, ut nulla vi dissolvi possit, nisi quum illum solus ipse qui fecit, ad majora alia prestanda nobis, solvi jusserit. *Novat. de Trinitate, Cap. 2.*

And

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And therefore 'tis not to be doubted but those antient Heathen Writers, who deliver this Doctrine in such express Terms, deriv'd their Knowledge of it from those who had some other Assistance besides Reason, even from the People of God (a).

But as Reason has not, of it self, any thing to say for this Point, so neither has it any thing to urge against it. There is nothing either in the Nature of God, or the Constitution of Things, which should make the Dissolution of this World by Fire an incredible Article.

It is made up of perishing Materials, and is capable of being dissolv'd by the same Power that first form'd it. He that rais'd it out of nothing, can certainly ruin it again in what manner, and at what time he pleases.

This is the Answer which *Octavius* returns to the Heathen *Cæcilius* in *Minutius Felix* (b) who made it an Objection against the Christians, and a double Instance of Madness, to threaten De-

(a) Agimadvertis Philosophos eadem disputare quæ dicimus, non quod nos simus eorum vestigia subsecuti, sed quod illi de divinis prædicationibus prophetarum umbram interpolatæ veritatis imitati sunt. *Minutius Felix. Edit. Cant. p. 189.*

(b) Quid? Quod toto orbi & ipsi mundo cum sideribus suis minantur incendium, ruinam moliantur, quasi aut naturæ divinis legibus constitutus æternus ordo turbetur; aut rupto elementorum omnium sædere, & cœlesti compage divisa, moles ista, qua continetur & cingitur, subruatur. Nec hac furiosâ opinione contenti, aniles fabulas adstruunt & annectunt. Renasci se ferunt post mortem & cineres & favillas, & nescio quâ fiducia mendaciis suis invicem credunt: Putes eos jam revixisse. *Anceps malum, & gemina dementia! Cœlo & astris, quæ sic relinquimus, ut invenimus, interitum de nuntiare: sibi mortuis, extinctis, qui sicut nascimur, & interimus, æternitatem repromittere. Ed. l. Cantab. p. 82. Sect. 11.*

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struction to the World, which still continues the same, and every Man who is born into it, leaves as he finds; and promise Immortality to their own dead Bodies which were mouldred into Dust, which had undergone such a great Change, while the World stood without any visible Alteration. This, I say, he resolves into the Power of the Great God (c).

And this Difference is remarkable between the Heathen and Christian Writers upon this Subject, that while the Christians believe this Truth upon the infallible Testimony of God, they rest satisfy'd in it. Whereas the Heathens who had got this Notion, but knew not what Authority there was for it, were continually inventing new Solutions of it, and miserably perplex'd about it (d).

Indeed

(c) Loquitur *Plato*. Partes orbis nunc inundare dicit, nunc alteris vicibus ardescere, & cum ipsum mundum perpetuum, & insolubilem diceret esse fabricatum, addit tamen, ipsi Artifici, Deo Soli, & Solubilem, & esse mortalem. Ita nihil mirum est, si ista moles ab eo, quo exstructa est, destruat. *Ibid.* p. 189. Ceterum quis tam stultus, aut brutus est, ut audeat repugnare hominem à Deo, ut primum potuisse fingi, ita posse denovo reformari? Nihil esse post obitum, & ante ortum nihil fuisse: Sicut de nihilo nasci licuit, ita de nihilo licere reparari? Porro, difficilius est id, quod non sit, incipere, quam id quod fuerit iterare, &c. *Ibid.*

(d) Sunt autem stellæ natura flammæ. Quo circa terræ, maris, aquarum vaporibus astantur iis, qui à sole ex agris tepelactis, & ex aquis excitantur: quibus altæ, renovatæq; stellæ, atq; omnis æther, refundunt eadem, & rursus trahunt indidem; nihil ut fere intereat, aut admodum paululum, quod astrorum ignis, & ætheris flamma consumat. Ex quo eventurum nostri putant id, de quo Panetium addubitare dicebant, ut ad extremum omnis mundus ignesceret, cum, humore consumpto, neq; terra ali posset, neq; remearet aer; cujus ortus, aqua omni exhausta, esse non posset; ita relinqui nihil præter ignem: à quo

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Indeed we who enjoy the Benefit of a Divine Revelation, and are there acquainted with God's Ways and Works, cannot reasonably entertain any Doubts concerning this great Article of a Dissolution of this World, and an ensuing Judgment; since we are assur'd that God has already done Things as great and surprizing as this.

That Argument which the Scoffers made use of to deride this Belief in the first Christians, is not only weak in it self, but grounded upon a false Matter of Fact.

Where, say they, is the Promise of his coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation, i. e. since the Fathers fell asleep, or, as the Words may be rendred, saving, or excepting that the Fathers fell asleep, and gave place to their Sons; that Men die, and one Generation succeeds another; (e) things run on in their old Channel, and no Alteration has happen'd in the World, nothing which should make us think that there will ever be such an amazing Change, as the Destruction of this World by Fire. But this, I

quo rursus animante, ac Deo, renovatio mundi fieret, atq; idem ornatus oriretur. *Cic. de Natura Deorum. L. 2.*

*But how little Satisfaction they found in these Solutions another Passage, out of the same Author, will inform us. Sint ista vera; comprehendi ea tamen, & percipi nego. Cum enim tuus iste Stoicus sapiens syllabatim tibi ista dixerit; veniet flumen orationis aureum fundens Aristoteles qui illum desipere dicat: Neq; enim ortum esse unquam mundum, quod nulla fuerit, novo consilio inito tam præclari operis inceptio, & ita eum esse undiq; aptum, ut nulla vis tantos queat motus, mutationemq; moliri, nulla senectus diuturnitate temporum existere, ut hic ornatus unquam dilapsus occidat. *Id. Acad. Quest. L. 2.**

(e) See Dr. Hammond's Note upon the Place.

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say, was false in Fact; For when this Objection was made, God had brought about several great and surprising Alterations in the World for the Punishment of Sin, from whence we may gather that he has still as great, and greater, in reserve for the same End.

It was not long after God had created this World, and pronounc'd *every thing he had made to be very good*, that he curs'd it because of Sin, and from a Paradise, a Place of Bliss and Happiness, he turn'd it into this Vale of Misery and Sorrow, this Scene of Calamities and Troubles.

Next after this, *because the Wickedness of Man was great upon the Earth, and all Flesh had corrupted his Way*, God brought a Flood of Waters upon the World, and destroy'd every living Thing from the Face of the Earth, both Man and Beast, *Noah* only and his Family excepted, and the Creatures which he took with him into the Ark, to keep Seed alive upon the Face of the Earth, *Gen. vi. 5, &c.*

For the same Reason, he spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, *and deliver'd them into Chains of Darknes, to be reserv'd unto Judgment: And turn'd the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into Ashes, and condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly*, *2 Pet. ii. 4, 6.*

Such Instances as these, especially that of the Deluge, the Apostle tells us, the Scoffers were wilfully, and even wilfully ignorant of, because they are so many Arguments for a future Reckoning,

as they are undeniable Proofs of God's hatred of Sin, and that he will not let it go unpunish'd.

From those great and amazing Things which God has done in time past, we may fairly conclude that he may do as great in the time to come. There is no Objection to be made against the Things we look for hereafter, but what might have been, and no doubt was, as strongly urg'd against those which have already happen'd.

Is the Dissolution of this World by Fire so strange and wonderful that we cannot believe it? Why, so were those things look'd upon to be which have already been before us. They were esteem'd strange, incredible, and even impossible, and reason'd against too as such, and endeavour'd to be confuted and exploded. Strange it was that God should create such a World as this; and we our selves *are fearfully and wonderfully made.*

Strange it was to behold that Destruction which he brought upon the Earth not long after he had made it, by a mighty Flood of Waters, in which every thing perish'd without Distinction wherein was the Breath of Life.

These are, it must be confess'd, very great and astonishing things, such as could not easily have been credited or conceiv'd: And why then should we disbelieve the Things that are yet for to come, only because they are new, and unheard of; strange and surprizing? For since such great Things have already been brought about, the Belief of the like great Revolutions to come is easy and natural. Reason has much to say for it, but nothing at
all

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all against it. Is it not reasonable to think, that God's Works should be all of a piece, and the end of them answerable to the beginning? Why should he not be as wonderful in his Dealings with the Children of Men in the Ages to come, as in those that are already past? And since, by the Word of God, the World that then was, being over-flow'd with Water perish'd; why may not the Heavens and the Earth which now are, by the same word, be kept in store, and reserv'd unto Fire against the Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men.

It would be vain to attempt a Description of this amazig Change and Revolution of the World; this great and terrible Day of the Lord; to represent the general Consternation of Nature at that Time; the Horror and Confusion which will then seize Mankind, especially the Wicked and Impenitent.

These are Things which exceed our narrow Capacities, which surpass all that we have seen or heard; all that we have known, or can think of. We have no Colours strong and lively enough to draw them in; we have neither Words to express them, nor Thoughts to conceive them, nor any Comparisons whereby we can illustrate and make them known.

Some faint Resemblance of these Things, the sad Occasion of the present Solemnity may afford us. It was, no doubt, a very frightful and shocking Spectacle, to view this great City in Flames, and to see the Misery and Distraction of the People: How all Things were in utter Confusion, and every one

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in wild Despair: How the wisest Men were amaz'd, and the stoutest terrify'd. *They that were on the House tops durst not stay to take any thing out of their Houses; nor he that was in the Field return back to take his Cloak.* Dismal it was to behold the *Abomination of Desolation raging in the sacred Places; to hear the Shrieks and Cries of the People, the roaring of the Fire, and the fall of great Piles of Buildings.*

But how much more terrible and dreadful will that Day be, when not only this City, but all the Cities of the World, and the World it self shall be burnt up; *when the Heavens themselves shall pass away with a great Noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat; when all Faces will be turned into Paleness, Jer. xxx. 6. And all the Tribes of the Earth shall mourn, Matt. xxiv. 29. The Sun shall be darkned, and the Moon not give her Light, and the Stars shall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of Heaven shall be shaken: When the whole Face of Nature shall be chang'd, and appear in the most mournful dress; every Place breaking out into open Flames; the great Deep boiling, and the Mountains smoaking, and the whole Course of Nature out of order; great Earthquakes in divers Places, fearful Sights, and great Signs from Heaven; upon the Earth, Distress of Nations, with Perplexity; the Sea and the Waves roaring, and Mens Hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those Things which are coming on the Earth. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the Clouds of Heaven, with Power and great Glory, Luke xxi. 25, &c.*

Thus

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Thus terrible and astonishing will this Day be to all the People of the Earth, but utter Confusion to the Wicked, *who shall call in vain to the Mountains to fall on them, and the Hills to cover them, Luke xxiii. 30. And fly in vain into the Clefts of the Rocks, and into the Caves of the Earth, for fear of the Lord, and the Glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the Earth, Isa. ii. 19. Rev. vi. 16, 17.*

No Heart can think of these Things, and not be fill'd with Fear and Wonder; and well may we take up our Parable with *Balaam*, and say, *Alas! who shall live when God does this?* Num. xxiv. 23. Who shall be able to stand before him, or abide the Day of his Coming!

But the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly, and to reserve the unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished, 2 Pet. ii. 9. And St. Paul assures us, 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. that both the Righteous which are dead, and which remain alive at this terrible Day, shall be rescu'd from the common Calamity; For the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the Clouds, to meet the Lord in the Air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This brings me to the

2. Second Thing contain'd in the Text, *The Effect and Influence which the Consideration of this Dissolution of all Things ought to have upon us. Seeing then that all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner*

of

of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness?

If we be fully perswaded of the Truth of this great Article; if we really believe that the *Heavens and the Earth which are now, are kept in store, reserv'd unto Fire against the Day of Judgment, and Perdition of ungodly Men*; 'tis a Consideration of such a weighty and serious Concern, as cannot fail to make some religious Impression upon us. Whenever we think of that *great and terrible Day of the Lord*, we cannot but think too of taking some Course with our selves to be deliver'd from these Flames, and escape the *Wrath to come*. And since there is no avoiding this Punishment, without avoiding those Sins for which it is prepar'd, what manner of Persons ought we to be! how Exemplary in all holy Conversation and Godliness! and how fruitful in every good Work! that when our Saviour appears to judge the World, *we may be found of him in Peace, without Spot and Blemish, 2 Pet. iii. 14. And be accounted worthy to escape all those Things which shall then come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.*

But the Consideration of this Dissolution of all Things, will appear to be a forcible Motive to all holy Conversation and Godliness. 1. *As it affords us an astonishing Instance of the Power and Majesty of the great God.* 2. *As it is an undeniable Proof of the Meanness and Vanity of all worldly Things.* 3. *As it gives us very urgent Warning to look and provide for another World.*

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And, 1. *I say the Dissolution of all Things affords us an astonishing Instance of the Power and Majesty of the great God.*

For by this we plainly see, that he wants no Instruments to save, none to destroy: As he created all Things, so he has all Things at his Command, and can make the Creature his Weapon for the Revenge of his Enemies, Wisd. v. 17. If he but speaks the Word, the Frame of Nature is dissolv'd, and the Elements fall foul upon one another.

When he is Angry, the Earth trembles and quakes, the Mountains shake, the Springs of Water are seen, and the Foundations of the round World are discover'd at the Chiding of the Lord, at the blasting of the Breath of his Displeasure, Psal. xviii. 7, 15. There shall go a Fire before him, and burn up his Enemies on every side. His Lightnings shall give Shine unto the World, and the Earth shall be afraid; the Hills shall melt like Wax at the Presence of God, at the Presence of the Lord of the whole Earth, Psal. xcvi. 3, &c.

Thus terrible is God in Majesty, thus mighty in Power, and wonderful in his Works.

And is not this an awakening Thought? Is there not enough in it to startle the boldest Sinner, and rouse us all out of our spiritual Slumber and Security? How greatly does it behoove us to walk humbly before him who is thus highly exalted, and behave our selves with godly Reverence and Fear? And what desperate Madnes, and brutish Stupidity is it to affront and provoke him who is thus able to destroy us with the Breath of his Mouth,

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Mouth, and send us down quick into Hell? And who, tho' he suffers us to escape now, *has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, and destroy both the World, and the Wicked together, with the brightness of his Appearance.*

None will be able to escape the Vengeance of that Day, and that Punishment which will then pursue the Wicked. And therefore, to use the words of the wise Son of Sirach, Ecclus. xvi. 17. &c. *Say not thou, I will hide my self from the Lord; shall any remember me from above? I shall not be remembered among so many People; for what is my Soul among such an infinite number of Creatures? Behold the Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, the Deep, and the Earth, and all that therein is, shall be moved when he shall visit. The Mountains also and Foundations of the Earth shall be shaken with trembling, when the Lord looketh upon them. No Heart can think of these Things worthily; and who is able to conceive his ways?*

Why art thou then so careless, O my Soul, and why art thou so secure within me! O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you! For our God is a consuming Fire.

2. *This Dissolution is an undeniable Proof of the Meanness and Vanity of all these worldly Things, and should therefore teach us not to love the World, or the Things that are in the World, but to wean our Affections from them.*

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And this would cure many Vices at once; for 'tis nothing else but our over-valuing these Things, that fixes our Thoughts, and fastens our Affections upon them, and puts us upon such an eager Pursuit after them. If we did not set such an immoderate Value upon these Things, we should not be so immoderate, either in our Desires, or our Enjoyments of them. And the Consideration of this approaching Dissolution affords us a convincing Proof of their Meanness; and should, methinks, be enough to put us out of Conceit with such perishing Vanities.

The many Accidents and Uncertainties which all our worldly Possessions are liable to, while the World it self continues, are so many Arguments to call off our Minds from them, and dissuade us from putting our Trust, or placing our Happiness in them. Upon these accounts, the wise Man elegantly styles them *Things which are not*, which have no certain and permanent Being; *Will thou*, says he, *set thine Eyes upon that which is not*. For Riches certainly make themselves Wings, they fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven, Prov. xxiii. 5. This was literally accomplish'd in the Calamity of this Day, when the Flames, which consum'd the Wealth and Substance of this great City, ascend'd as an Eagle towards Heaven; and They, who just before, were *Rich and encreased in Goods*, and *had need of nothing*, were, in a short Space of Time, reduc'd to the utmost Poverty, and wanted even the common Necessaries and Accommodations of Life.

But

But besides these, and other daily Casualties, which these Things are liable to, and which ought to abate our Esteem for them, as they really render them so much the less valuable; the World it self, which is the Support of these Things, and which ministers to our Pleasures and our Vices, to Lust and Avarice, and Ambition, is it self hastning to a Dissolution; and the Time is coming on which will put a Period to it, when *the Earth it self, and the Works that are therein shall be burne up*; the Works of Nature, Art, and Industry shall be destroy'd; when all the Pomp and Pride of Life shall pass away, and vanish into Smoak; when all the Affairs, on which we are now so busy and intent, shall have an end, and the Stage whereon they are acted, shall be taken down; when all Pride and Contention, Avarice and Ambition shall cease, and the Objects of these Passions be for ever remov'd from our Eyes; when all civil Marks of difference and distinction shall be done away; the greatest Empires, and Imperial Cities, shall be laid waste and desolate without an Inhabitant; the Proudest Trophies and Monuments of Glory shall be crumbled into Dust, and the Place thereof shall know them no more.

And since this is the Condition, and this will be the Fate of this World, and all that is in it, why should we, who are made for Immortality, and Candidates for Heaven, set our Affections upon any Thing less permanent and durable than our selves? And how disproportionate are all Things here below to the Capacities of our Souls, and
their

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their eternal Duration? How ill then does it become us to dote upon any of these Things, or give our selves up to the Enjoyment of them? The Thoughts of the Dissolution of this World, should, one would think, extinguish all our Heats and Contentments about it; should cure our Pride and Ambition, and abate our Love of sensual Pleasures; and make us cool and indifferent as to what befalls us here. This is St. John's Argument, 1 Ep. ii. 15, &c. *Love not the World, neither the Things that are in the World:—For the World passeth away, and the Lust thereof.* To the same purpose is that of St. Paul, 1 Cor. vii. 29. *But this I say, Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have Wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this World, as not abusing it; for the Fashion of this World passeth away.* And therefore,

3. *This is sufficient Warning to us to look, and provide for another World.*

Not only we our selves are of a short Continuance here, and are hasting apace to another Place; but the World it self is transient and fugitive, and when once the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it, and this Fire is risen with a burning Heat, all the Beauty and Grace of the Fashion of it will perish, and like a morning Cloud, or as the early Dew, it will pass away.

This short and imperfect State will not admit of any great and lasting Designs: Here we are
straightned

straightned and want room; and nothing which we do, with regard to this World, can be of much Concern to us, because it will not long concern us. But the State after this is eternal and immutable, is capable of the greatest and noblest Designs, such as are worthy of a rational Creature, and deserve our utmost Care: For there we may be happy, not for a few Days or Years only, and that in an imperfect Degree, but infinitely, and to all Eternity.

And 'tis nothing else that makes this World worth living in, that makes it desirable to a wise Man to be here for a Time, but the Opportunity which it gives him of living for ever, and being happy for ever hereafter.

Now the only way to secure this, is by a Life of Piety and Virtue, *by all holy Conversation and Godliness; by cleansing our selves from all Filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit, purifying our Natures, and renewing our selves after the Image of God, who created us in Righteousness and true Holiness.*

This World is made up of mixt Multitudes, and the Kingdoms of the Earth consist of good and bad; but at the last Day there will be a grand Separation made of the Righteous from the Wicked, and an eternal Distinction put between them. *Into the Kingdom of Heaven, no unclean Thing shall enter, and without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*

If therefore we expect to be made Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, we must make our selves meet for it, by cleansing our selves from all Impurities and Defilements, and walking as Children of the Light.

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The Necessity of this, the Consideration of the present Argument does in a lively manner represent to us, and is the Inference the Apostle draws from it, *Seeing then, &c.* Seeing the World it self must undergo such a Change, and be purg'd and refin'd by Fire, and be made perfectly New, that it may be fit for the glorious Kingdom of Christ; this Change, this Renovation, is much more necessary in those who are to be the Subjects of that Kingdom, wherein dwelleth Righteousness. If this Earth must be purify'd by Fire, and the Heavens themselves are not clean in God's sight; how shall Man be able to appear before him, *who is filthy and abominable, and drinketh Iniquity like Water?* Job xv. 16. And what Purity and Cleanness is necessary to fit our selves for seeing God? * Not that this Change can be wrought in us, as it will be in the Heavens and the Earth, by Fire, by the fancy'd Flames of Purgatory, for which there is no ground, either in Scripture or Reason; but it must be wrought in us by such Methods as both Scripture and Reason direct us to, and which are fitted to work upon reasonable Creatures; by proper Considerations and Reflections, such as the foregoing Discourse will suggest to us; by setting God always before us, and thinking upon his infinite Majesty and Power; by weaning our Affections

* Quod si tunc oportet usque adeo omnia esse pura, ut hæc etiam dissolvenda sint quæ non peccant, quantopere vobis adnitendum est, ut dies ille vos omni vitæ sanctimoniam, omnibus pietatis studiis integros ac purgatos reperiatur? *Erasm. in locum.*

from this World, and fixing them on Heaven; by giving diligent Attendance to all the Duties of Religion, and being constant in the Practice of those holy Rules which the Gospel prescribes us; by denying our selves, and striving to overcome our Corruptions, and perfect our Virtues; and by praying to God for the Assistance of his Holy Spirit to enable us to bring our Wills to a Conformity with his.

Thus may we escape the Corruption which is in the World through Lust, or cleanse our selves from that Guilt and Filth which we have contracted by our Conversation with it.

Thus will there be a new Heart, and a right Spirit created in us, which will remain when all these things shall be dissolv'd, and rescue us from the general Ruin, and, through the Merits of our Saviour, procure us Admittance into Heaven, where we shall have a Treasure that faileth not, a Kingdom which cannot be shaken, and a City which hath everlasting Foundations, whose Builder, and Maker is God.

Having thus finish'd what I design'd from these Words, I come now to apply my self to the sad Occasion of this Day.

We are here assembled in the House of God to humble our selves before him in Consideration of that sore Judgment which he sent down upon this City, when *his Wrath was kindled, and wax'd bot against the Sheep of his Pasture.*

How did the Lord cover the Daughter of our Sion with a Cloud, and cast down from Heaven to Earth the

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Beauty

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Beauty of Israel, and remembred not his Footstool in the Day of his Anger!

The Ramparts and the Walls lamented and languish'd; her Gates were sunk to the Ground, and her Bars destroy'd. The Destruction was so suddain that this City was within less than Three Days from the most splendid and flourishing Condition reduc'd to Ashes, and laid level with the Ground.

To what thing shall I liken thee, O Daughter of my People; whereunto shall I compare the Day of thy Visitation? *To the overthrowing of Sodom and Gomorrah? To the Destruction of Jerusalem? Or to the great and terrible Day of the Lord?*

But to dilate upon this Argument, and bring back to your Minds that sad Calamity, however proper it might be when the Object it self was before your Eyes, and the City lay in Ashes; may seem, perhaps, unseasonable now, and unsuitable to the present Face of Things, which has *no Marks or Scars of Burning upon it; since our Breach which was wide as the Sea is now repair'd, and all is built again with greater Grandeur and Magnificence than ever.*

However the same Thoughts and Reflections which were proper to be made upon that heavy Judgment while we lay under it, and felt its Weight, can never be unseasonable, and are very proper even now when 'tis remov'd.

It will still become us Yearly to humble ourselves under the mighty Hand of God, and acknowledge that it was his doing; and that he was just in all that he brought upon us. For whoever were

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the Instruments of this Calamity, we are not to terminate our Thoughts there, but to carry them up to God, who often makes use of the Wickedness of Men to bring about his Designs, and be the Executioners of his Vengeance upon a sinful People. Whatever Agents God makes use of, the Work is still to be ascrib'd to him, and there is nothing of a blind Chance or over-ruling Necessity in human Affairs, but all Things are done either by the Permission or immediate Direction of Heaven. *Doth not Evil and Good proceed out of the Mouth of the most High?* saith the Prophet, *Lam. iii. 38. And shall there be Evil in a City and the Lord hath not done it?* Amos iii. 6.

These were *Job's* Sentiments of the Matter, that *Affliction cometh not forth of the Dust, neither doth Trouble spring out of the Ground*, Chap. v. 6. 'Tis not a Thing of any spontaneous Growth, or the meer Effect of second Causes, but the Will and Work of God.

And therefore when the *Chaldeans* and *Sabæans* carry'd away his Cattle, and slew his Servants with the Edg of the Sword; and the Wind from the Wilderness smote the House where his Sons and Daughters were Feasting, so that it fell upon them, and slew them; *Job* did not stop his Reflections at these second Causes, but through them discern'd, and acknowledg'd the Hand of God.

But as we must not stop at second Causes, so neither are we wholly to overlook them. Tho' *Job* acknowledg'd that what the *Chaldeans* and *Sabæans* did was by God's Permission, yet he could

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not but look upon those People as his Enemies, and guard against them for the future. So if the Calamity of this Day, was in any measure the Effect of the Malice and Wickedness of Men (as we have just Cause to suspect) we may from thence judge what manner of Spirit they are of, and how they will deal with us, whenever they have us in their Power.

For tho' the Hand of God was very visible in this sad Calamity, yet the Hand of Man was not altogether hid. And as there were evident Tokens of its being a divine Judgment, so it wanted not Marks of human Contrivance, and we have just Grounds to suspect that an Enemy did it; that it was contriv'd and carry'd on by the Popish Faction, who have often sought our Ruin, and given us too many Proofs of their Enmity and Hatred against us; and who, we have reason to believe, said in their Hearts upon this Occasion, what they endeavour'd to bring about with their Hands; *There, there, so would we have it. Down with it, down with it, even to the Ground.*

Nor was this any distant Surmise, or remote Suspicion, but the general Sense, and settled Belief of the Nation at that time, not taken up without due Examination into the Matter, (a) which, in their Opinion, afforded sufficient Grounds for that Charge.

(a) Immediately after the Fire, upon the 18th of the same Month, the Parliament met, and a Committee of the House of Commons was appointed to enquire into the Causes of it. The Informations received by the Committee are Printed, to which I refer the Reader *. Upon the 8th

Charge upon the Papists, which still stands to publick View, that it may be seen, and read of all as a Testimony against them (b).

But this, I say, does not make it ever the less the Lord's doing. It is still to be acknowledg'd as a Judgment of God; and the Judgment was so much the sorer in that he suffer'd us to fall into

of Feb. following, the Parliament was Prorogued, before they came to give their Judgment upon Sir Robert Brook's Report.

What Sir John Hawles relates in his Remarks upon the Tryal of Fitzharris, is very observable, that upon a Report, which a Member of the House of Commons made of one Hubert, who confess'd himself guilty of firing the City of London; it was resolv'd to Examine him in the House the next Morning, but before the House sat, Hubert was hang'd.

The Words of the Lord Chancellor, Nottingham, High-Seward, when he pronounced Sentence upon the Lord Stafford, are very full to the present purpose.

Doth any Man now begin to doubt how London came to be burnt? Or by what Hands or Means poor Justice Godfrey fell? And is it not apparent by these Instances, that such is the frantick Zeal of some bigotted Papists, that they resolve no Means, to advance the Catholick Cause, shall be left unattempted, though it be by Fire and Sword?

* The Report of Sir Robert Brook, Chair Man to the Committee that was appointed by the House of Commons, to enquire into the firing of the City of London, made the 22d of Jan. 1666.

(b) Inscription upon the Monument, viz. This Pillar was set up in perpetual Remembrance of that most dreadful Burning of this Protestant City, begun and carry'd on by the Treachery and Malice of the Popish Faction in the beginning of September, in the Year of our Lord 1666. in order to the carrying on their Horrid Plot, for extirpating the Protestant Religion, and Old English Liberty, and the introducing Popery and Slavery.

And after a particular Description of the whole Progress of the Fire, and how it was at last extinguish'd, these Words are added— Sed furor Papisticus qui tam dira patravit nondum restinguitur.

N. B. This Inscription was put up when this Pillar was first built, but was afterwards Eras'd in King James the Second's Reign, and restor'd at the glorious Revolution.

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the Hands of such Men. And we ought to acknowledge the Justice of it, and reflect with Shame and Sorrow upon those Sins which provok'd him to deal thus severely with us.

Pride, and Covetousness, and Oppression; Fulness of Bread, and Wantonness; with a Neglect and Forgetfulness of God; are the common Sins of great and wealthy Cities; and were the Means of bringing down this heavy Judgment upon us. And therefore if we would make a right Use of God's Chastisements, and avoid the like Calamities for the future, we must avoid these Sins: *And since the Judgments of God have been so remarkable in this City, the Inhabitants thereof should learn Righteousness, Isaiah xxvi. 9.*

This is the End of all God's Dispensations towards us, and this is the proper Use we should make of that Judgment which we now Commemorate.

The return of this Day should put us all upon examining our own Hearts, to correct whatever we find amiss, and remove whatever is offensive and displeasing to God: Thus may every private Person contribute towards a general Reformation, by reforming himself.

And this is the most effectual Method that can be taken for this End. For tho' much of this kind has been, and may be done by the Care of the Civil Magistrates, by their Authority and Example. Yet no Man has that Knowledge of another, or that Power over him which every Man has over himself. So that if every Man would but deal impartially with himself, and amend those Faults which

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which his Conscience tells him he is guilty of, we might remove *the accursed Thing* from among us, and prevent God's Anger, from *kindling anew, and his Wrath from breaking out afresh upon us.*

And it must be confess'd; and is what ought to be commended, that amidst all the Complaints of the Wickedness of the Age, there are great Numbers of serious and devout People in this City: There is a Spirit of Religion still amongst us, and which is fruitful in good Works. The Lord's Day is strictly and religiously kept; The Publick Worship of God is diligently attended; The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper frequented; And the other Ordinances of the Church observ'd: And all this is not without its Effect upon Mens Lives and Conversations.

Covetousness cannot now be call'd the Sin of this City, since such and so many excellent Charities have been set on Foot, and carry'd on: And such Provision is made at the Expence of private Persons, for the Education of Children, and the taking Care of those who can take none of themselves.

O that the Numbers of such well-dispos'd People may daily encrease, and that they may go on, and abound more and more in these and all other good Works! This may prove a Lengthning of our Tranquility, and be the Means of continuing to us the Divine Protection, without which there is no Safety or Security to be had. *For except the Lord keep the City, the Watchman waketh but in vain.*

And

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And since God in the midst of his Judgment remembred Mercy, since he preserv'd a Remnant and pluck'd us as a Brand out of the Fire that we should not utterly perish; and has restor'd and renew'd us again even beyond our former State let us take heed that we give him no new Provocation; but let us follow our Saviour's Advice to the impotent Man which he had heal'd of his Infirmary, *Behold, thou art made whole: Sin no more, lest a worse Thing come unto thee,* St. John v. 14.

F I N I S.

Just Publish'd,

SOME Motives purely Christian to Alms-Deeds; recommended in a Sermon preach'd before the Lord Bishop and Clergy of *Chester*, at their Anniversary Meeting, for Relief of Widow and Orphans of poor Clergymen, at *Warrington* June 5. 1711. By *Henry Newcome*, M. A. Rector of *Middleton* in *Lancashire*.

Remarks upon some Places of Mr. *Whiston's* Books, either Printed or in Manuscript: By *P. Allix*, D. D. The Second Edition. To which is added an Answer to Mr. *Whiston's* Reply.

Tractatus de Imputatione Peccati *Adami* Posteris ejus universis in Reatum: Autore *D. Whirby*, S. T. P.

A Sermon preach'd in the Parish-Church of *St. Mary at Lambeth*, on Sunday, Aug. 12. 1711. By *John Garnet*, M. A. Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of *Devonshire*.

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